

# UNDER THE SUN

Joy, Sorrow, Vanity, and What Really Matters in Life

*Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. -Ecclesiastes 12:13*

## “The Problem of Problems”

Ecclesiastes 3:15-4:16

### **Ecclesiastes 4:1 (NKJV)**

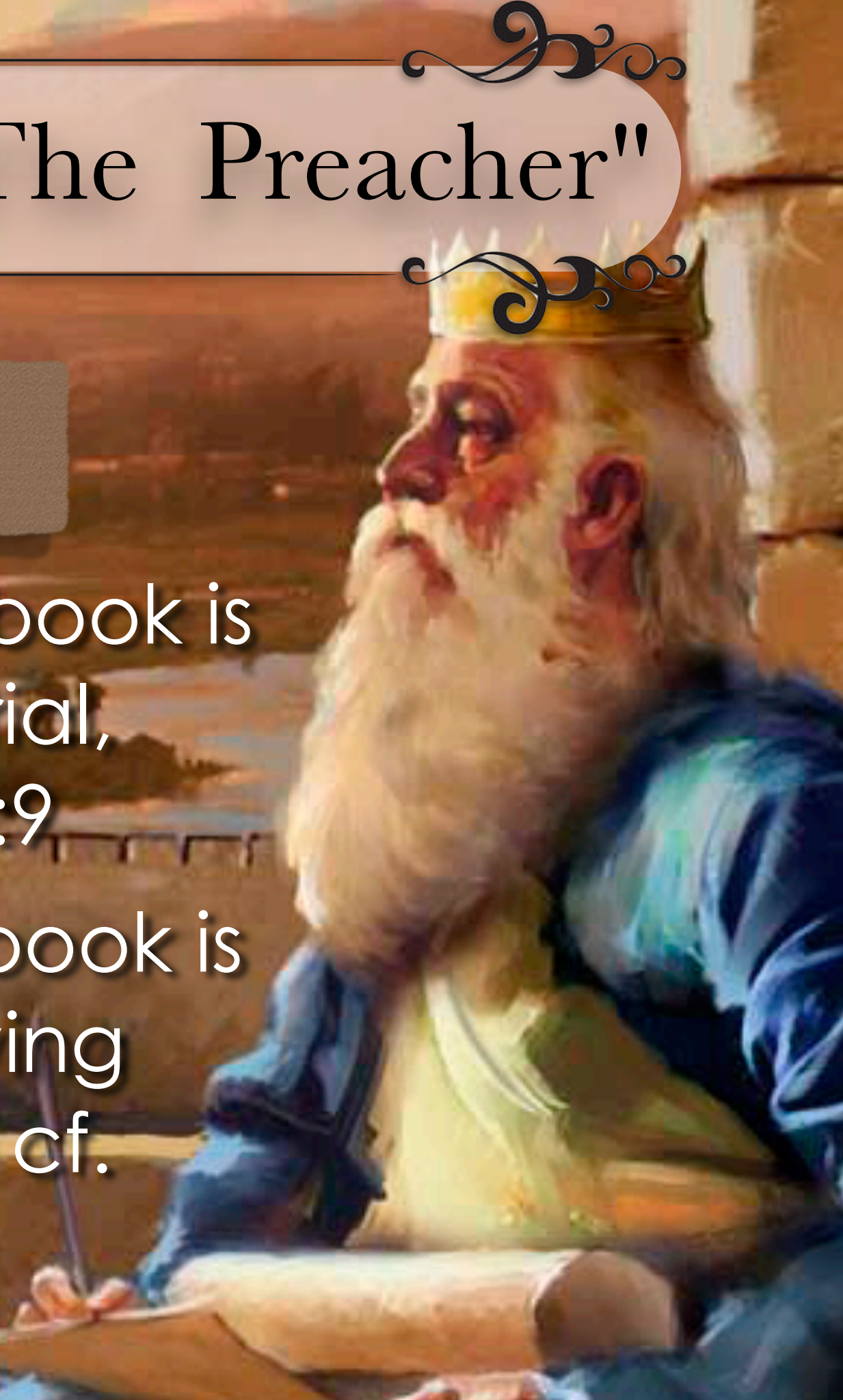
<sup>1</sup> Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: And look! The tears of the oppressed, But they have no comforter— On the side of their oppressors *there is* power, But they have no comforter.



# "The Words of The Preacher"

## ECCLESIASTES

- The main focus of the book is the VANITY of of material, earthly things — 1:1-11:9
- The main point of the book is the importance of serving God throughout life — cf. 11:9-12:1, 13-14

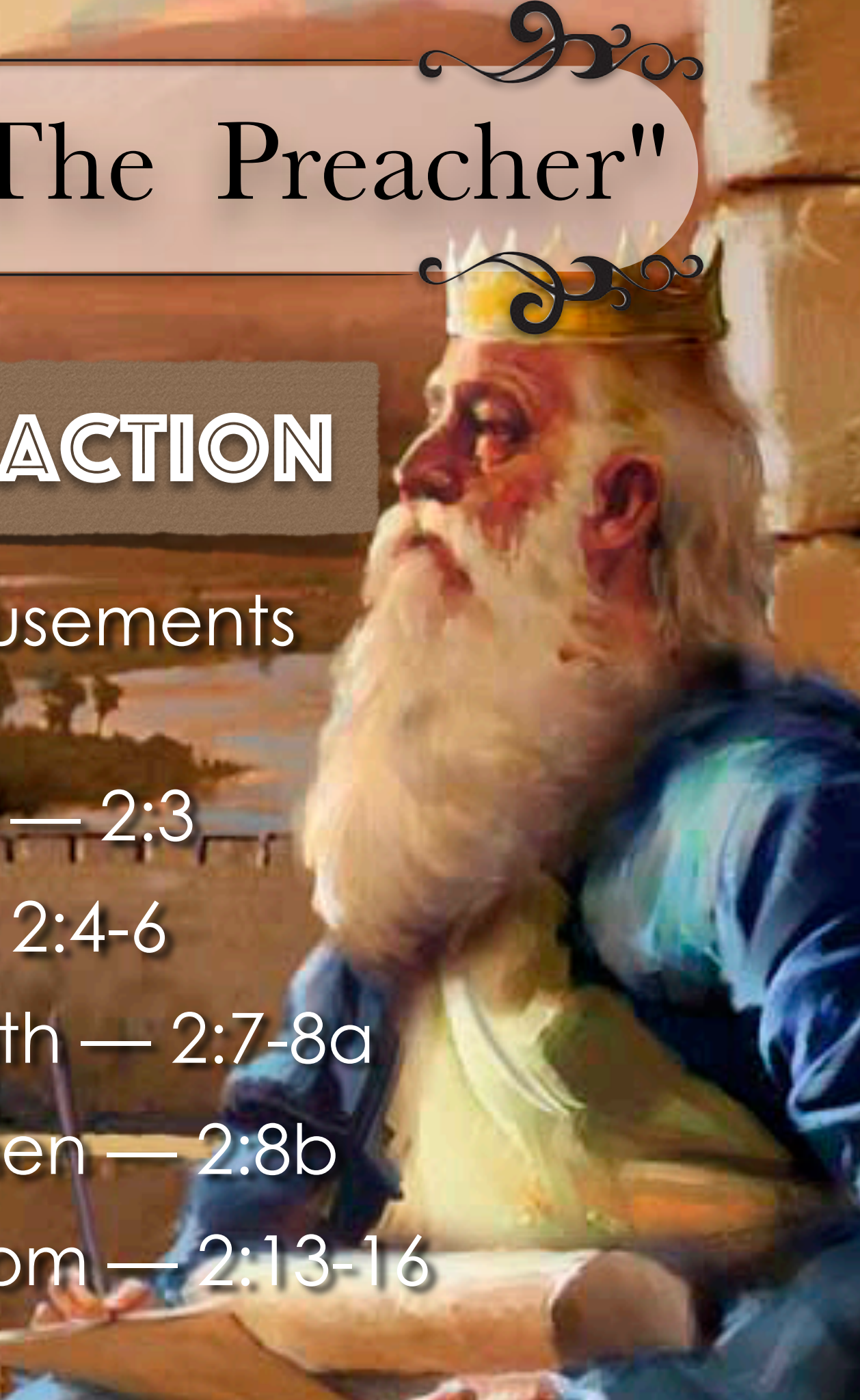




# "The Words of The Preacher"

## THE QUEST FOR SATISFACTION

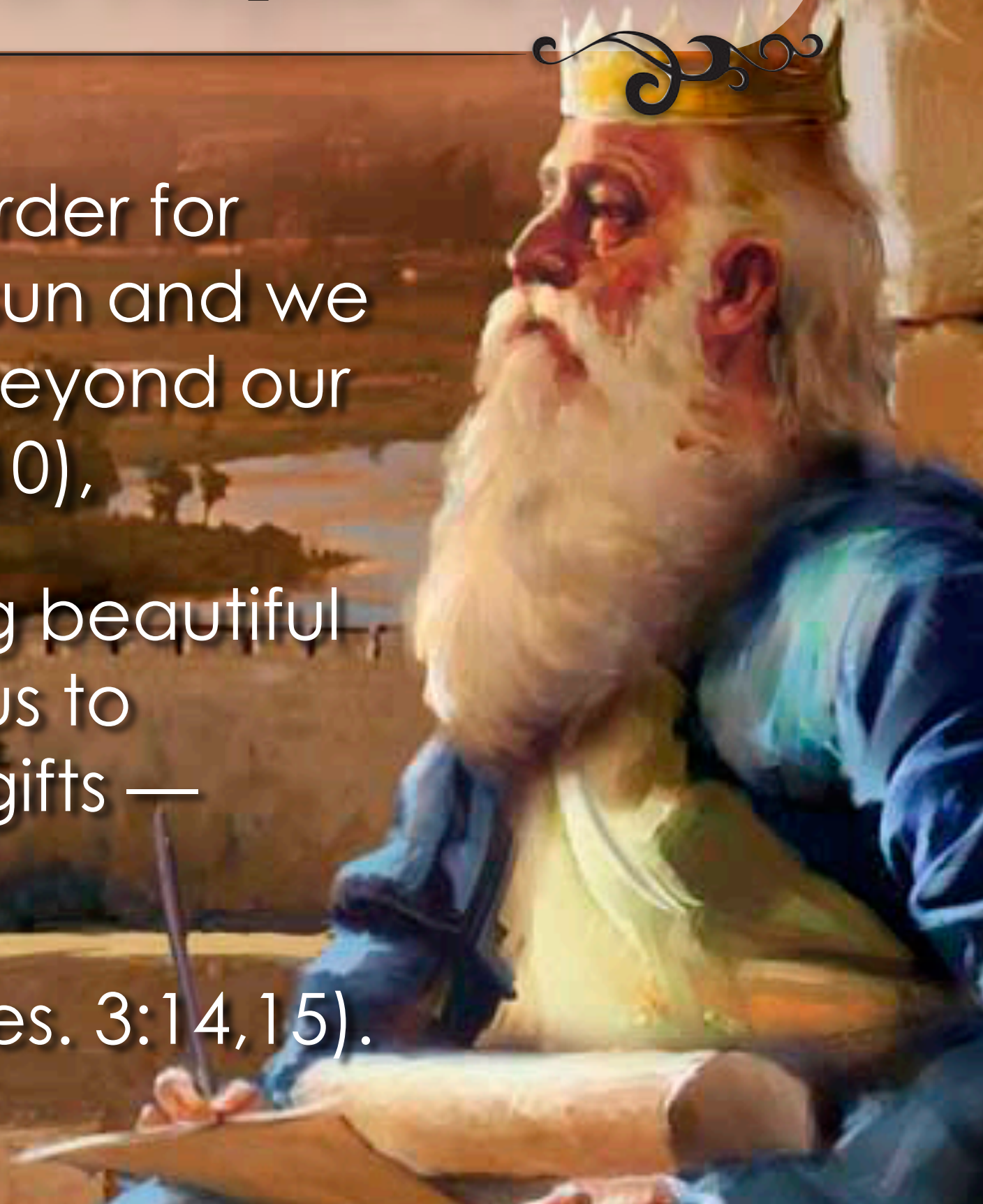
- ❖ Cannot be found in “amusements and delights?” — 2:1,2
- ❖ Cannot be found in wine — 2:3
- ❖ Cannot be found in work 2:4-6
- ❖ Cannot be found in wealth — 2:7-8a
- ❖ Cannot be found in women — 2:8b
- ❖ Cannot be found in wisdom — 2:13-16





# “To Understand The Purpose of It All”

- There is a purpose & order for everything under the sun and we are subject to things beyond our control— (Eccles. 3:1-10),
- God makes everything beautiful in its season, & wants us to moderately enjoy His gifts — (Eccles. 3:11,12).
- God is in control (Eccles. 3:14,15).





## Ecclesiastes 3:16–4:16 (NKJV)

<sup>16</sup> Moreover I saw under the sun: *In* the place of judgment, Wickedness *was* there; And *in* the place of righteousness, Iniquity *was* there. <sup>17</sup> I said in my heart, “God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, For *there is* a time there for every purpose and for every work.” <sup>18</sup> I said in my heart, “Concerning the condition of the sons of men, God tests them, that they may see that they themselves are *like* animals.”



## **Ecclesiastes 3:16–4:16 (NKJV)**

<sup>19</sup> For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all *is* vanity. <sup>20</sup> All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust. <sup>21</sup> Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth?



## Ecclesiastes 3:16–4:16 (NKJV)

<sup>22</sup> So I perceived that nothing *is* better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that *is* his heritage. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him? <sup>1</sup> Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: And look! The tears of the oppressed, But they have no comforter— On the side of their oppressors *there is* power, But they have no comforter.



## **Ecclesiastes 3:16–4:16 (NKJV)**

<sup>2</sup> Therefore I praised the dead who were already dead, More than the living who are still alive. <sup>3</sup> Yet, better than both *is he* who has never existed, Who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun. <sup>4</sup> Again, I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor. This also *is* vanity and grasping for the wind. <sup>5</sup> The fool folds his hands And consumes his own flesh.



## Ecclesiastes 3:16–4:16 (NKJV)

<sup>6</sup> Better a handful *with* quietness Than both hands full, *together with* toil and grasping for the wind. <sup>7</sup> Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun: <sup>8</sup> There is one alone, without companion: He has neither son nor brother. Yet *there is* no end to all his labors, Nor is his eye satisfied with riches. *But he never asks*, “For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good?” This also *is* vanity and a grave misfortune.



## Ecclesiastes 3:16–4:16 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> Two *are* better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. <sup>10</sup> For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him *who is* alone when he falls, For *he has* no one to help him up. <sup>11</sup> Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm *alone*? <sup>12</sup>

Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.



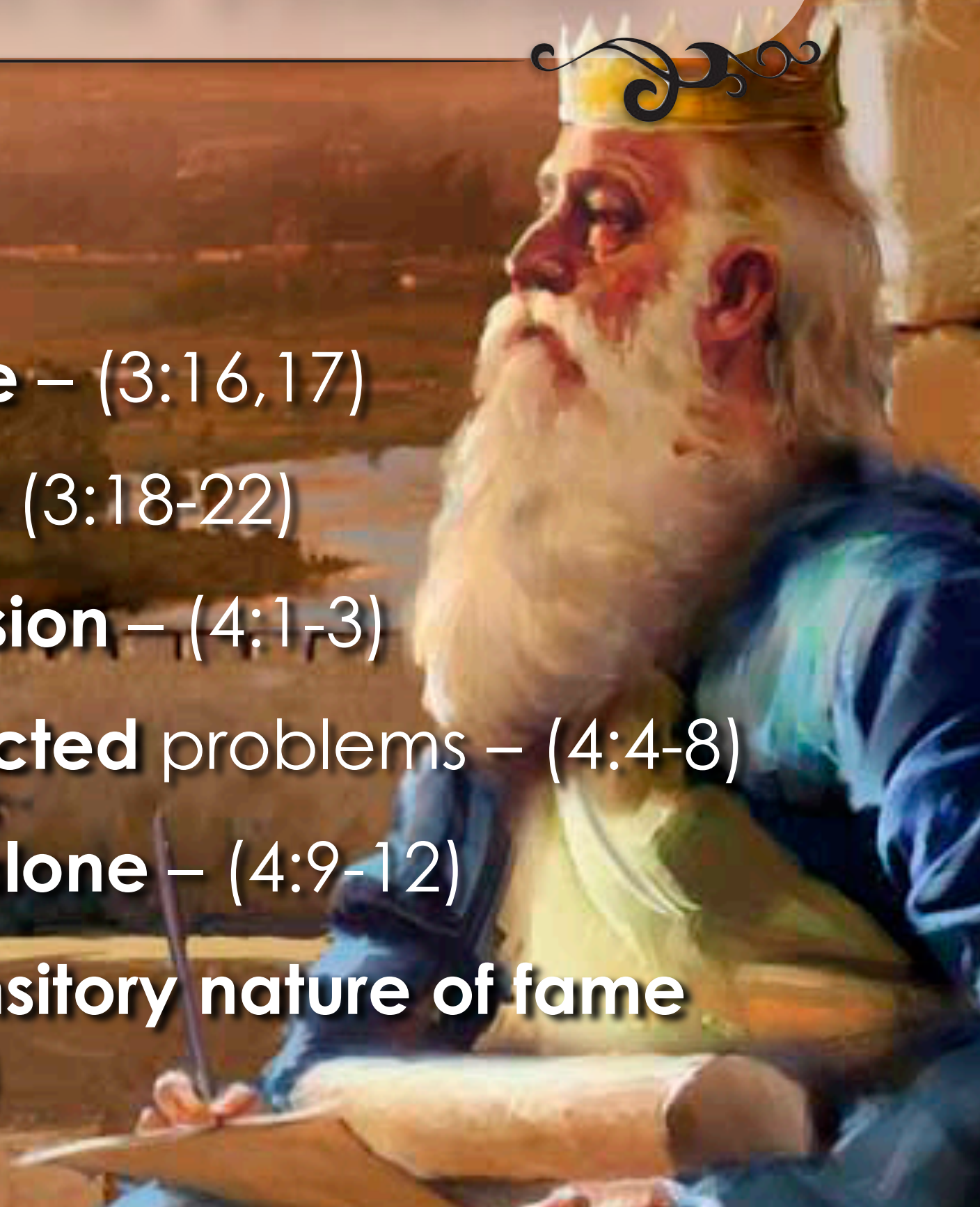
## **Ecclesiastes 3:16–4:16 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup> Better a poor and wise youth Than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more. <sup>14</sup> For he comes out of prison to be king, Although he was born poor in his kingdom. <sup>15</sup> I saw all the living who walk under the sun; They were with the second youth who stands in his place. <sup>16</sup> *There was* no end of all the people over whom he was made king; Yet those who come afterward will not rejoice in him. Surely this also *is* vanity and grasping for the wind.



# “The Problem of Problems”

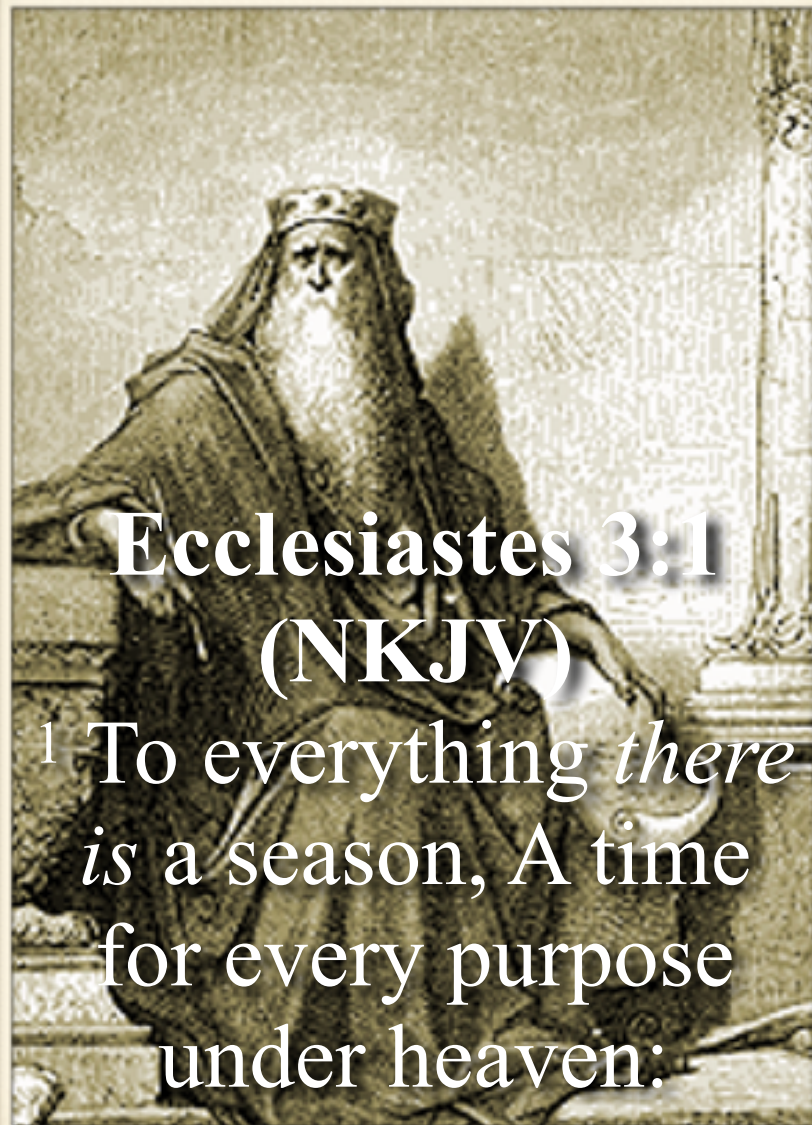
- The problem of **injustice** – (3:16,17)
- The problem of **death** – (3:18-22)
- The problem of **oppression** – (4:1-3)
- The problem of **self inflicted** problems – (4:4-8)
- The problem of **being alone** – (4:9-12)
- The problem of the **transitory nature of fame and prestige** – (4:13-16)





# “The Problem of Problems”

## Is There A Purpose For Problems?



**Ecclesiastes 3:1  
(NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> To everything *there*  
is a season, A time  
for every purpose  
under heaven:

LONELINESS

INJUSTICE

OPPRESSION

LIFE

DEATH



# “The Problem of Problems”

## Is There A Purpose For Problems?

**Ecclesiastes 3:18**  
**(NKJV)**

18 I said in my heart,  
“Concerning the  
condition of the sons  
of men, God tests  
them, that they may  
see that they  
themselves are *like*  
animals.”

- ▶ The Hebrew uses the infinitive lebham (from barar) which means to “separate,” to “winnow,” to “prove.”
- ▶ People are certainly tested when they suffer injustice. What is in the heart quickly is made manifest.
- ▶ God’s desire is that we turn our hearts to Him! He is secure and provides us security in the midst of turbulence - - - The SAME sun that HARDENS clay melts butter ...



# “The Problem of Problems”

## THE PROBLEM OF INJUSTICE

Ecclesiastes 3:16  
(NKJV)

<sup>16</sup> Moreover I saw  
under the sun: *In* the  
place of judgment,  
Wickedness *was*  
there; And *in* the  
place of  
righteousness,  
Iniquity *was* there.

► **Where there is NO FEAR of God, injustice abounds**

- Injustice is briefly mentioned here and is mentioned again in later passages (5:8; 8:10-15; 9:13-16; 10:5-7; 10:16)
- Anticipating an objection to the fact that God rules, knowing corruption abounds, Solomon acknowledges the problem - injustice occurs — Hab 1:13-14



# “The Problem of Problems”

## THE PROBLEM OF INJUSTICE

Ecclesiastes 3:16  
(NKJV)

<sup>16</sup> Moreover I saw  
under the sun: *In the*  
place of judgment,  
Wickedness *was*  
there; And *in the*  
place of  
righteousness,  
Iniquity *was* there.

► **Where there is NO FEAR of God, injustice abounds**

- Injustice occurs today - In the place where godly, righteous and fair-minded men should be, there are liars, thieves & outright criminals who care only for the advancement of their agenda.
- The wealthy & powerful defeat justice with bribes or threats - double standards abound.



# “The Problem of Problems”

## THE PROBLEM OF INJUSTICE

Ecclesiastes 3:17  
(NKJV)

17 I said in my heart,  
“God shall judge the  
righteous and the  
wicked, For *there is*  
a time there for  
every purpose and  
for every work.”

### ► Where there is NO FEAR of God, injustice abounds

- “God will judge”—This is the ultimate and final season, the time of judgment and nobody is exempt (2 Cor. 5:10).
- God’s judgment will be RIGHT and impartial — Romans 2:5-11; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46;
- God will avenge - 2 Thess. 1:6–9



# “The Problem of Problems”

## THE PROBLEM OF DEATH

**Ecclesiastes 3:19–  
20 (NKJV)**

<sup>19</sup> For what happens  
to the sons of men  
also happens to  
animals; one thing  
befalls them: as one  
dies, so dies the  
other. ... <sup>20</sup> all return  
to dust.

### ► **Man's Acknowledged Impotence (3:19–20)**

- The one thing that befalls both man & animals – (3:19)
- Physically – humans & animals go to the same place – (3:20)
- But – there is a major difference – Verse 21 is intended to be a corrective to the potential misinterpretation of verse 20 — cf 12:7; Lu. 16:22, 23; Heb 9:27



# “The Problem of Problems”

## THE PROBLEM OF WORRY

**Ecclesiastes 3:22  
(NKJV)**

22 So I perceived  
that nothing is better  
than that a man  
should rejoice in his  
own works, for that  
is his heritage. For  
who can bring him  
to see what will  
happen after him?

### ► Concluding observation (22)

- The preliminary conclusion of v. 12 is now appropriately reiterated. Man is not master of his own lot.
- We are powerless to control the forces around us — All we can do is enjoy the present, making the best of life, & avail ourselves of the bounties which the mercy of God places before us. — Mat. 6:24-34; 2 Cor. 6:2; etc.



# “The Problem of Problems”

## THE PROBLEM OF OPPRESSION

**Ecclesiastes 4:1  
(NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Then I returned  
and considered all  
the oppression that  
is done under the  
sun: And look! The  
tears of the  
oppressed, But they  
have no comforter—

### ► The Suffering of the Oppressed (4:1–3)

- A great evil – (4:1)
- Oppressed often ignored – (4:1)
- Those who have died are no longer oppressed by evil men in power (4:2) – (Not taking into consideration their spiritual state)
- Better never to have been born – (4:3; 6:3,4; Job 3:10-16)



# “The Problem of Problems”

## THE PROBLEM OF SELF INFLICTED PROBLEMS

**Ecclesiastes 4:4  
(NKJV)**

<sup>4</sup> Again, I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor. This also *is* vanity and grasping for the wind.

### ► The Pressures on the Successful (4:4–6)

- (NASB) . . . every labor and every skill which is done is the result of rivalry between a man and his neighbor.
- (NIV) . . . all labor and all achievement spring from man's envy of his neighbor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.



# “The Problem of Problems”

## THE PROBLEM OF SELF INFLICTED PROBLEMS

**Ecclesiastes 4:4  
(NKJV)**

<sup>4</sup> Again, I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor. This also *is* vanity and grasping for the wind.

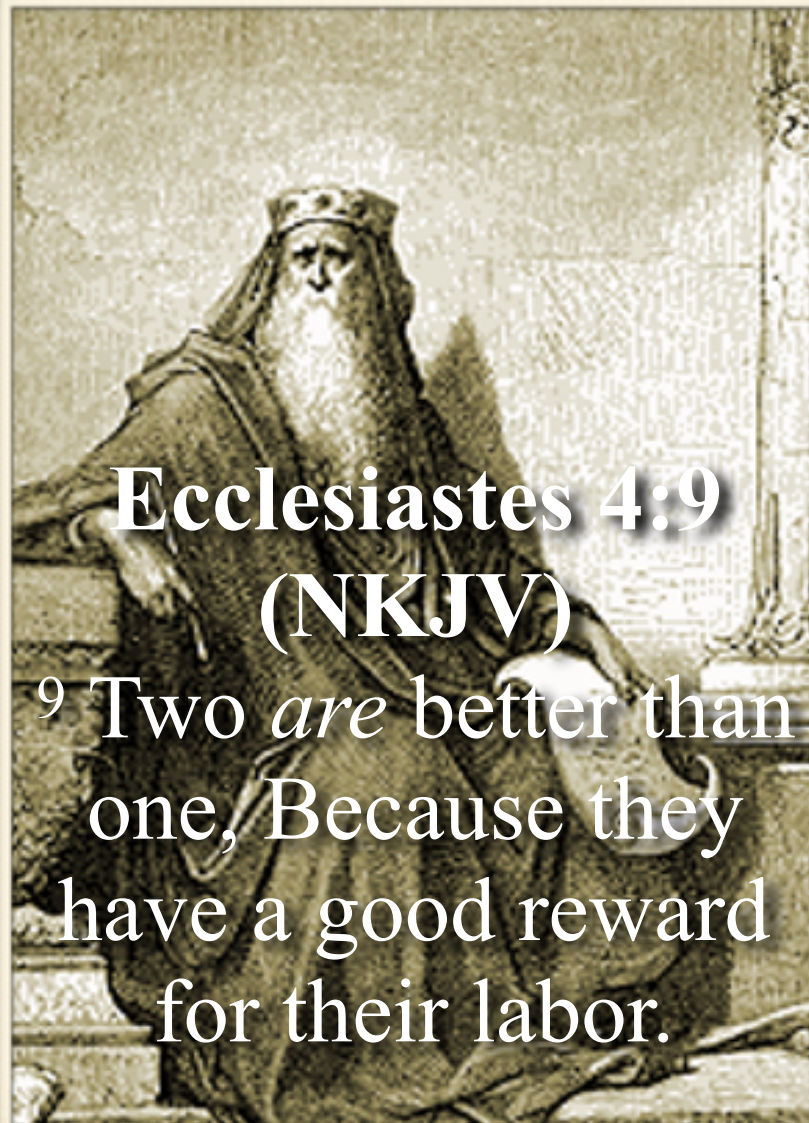
### ► The Pressures on the Successful (4:4–6)

- The fool consumes himself - (4:5; Job 5:2; Prov 14:30; 6:10-11; 20:4; 24:33-34 )
- The value of contentment over chasing “the wind” at the expense of others — (4:6; Ps. 37:16. Pr. 15:16, 17; 16:8; 17:1)
- The selfish miser — Alone / Unsatisfied / Unhappy — (4:7-8)



# “The Problem of Problems”

## THE PROBLEM OF BEING ALONE



**Ecclesiastes 4:9  
(NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> *Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor.*

### ► The Loneliness of the Wealthy (4:7–12)

- The value of a friend – (4:9)
- But woe to him who is alone when he falls - (4:10)
- Companionship is helpful, & profitable – (4:11)
- A friend provides strength in times of trouble – (4:12)
- The importance of unity – Mark 3:24-26; Ep 4:1-3; Phili 1:27-30



# “The Problem of Problems”

## THE PROBLEM OF OF FAME & PRESTIGE



### ► The Insecurity of High Position (4:13–16)

- Sometimes rulers forget whom they serve – (4:13)
- So the people turn to another thinking he will be more sympathetic - (4:14)
- They all follow him – (4:15,16)
- But – the next generation will want change – (4:16)



# “The Problem of Problems”

## THE PROBLEM OF OF FAME & PRESTIGE



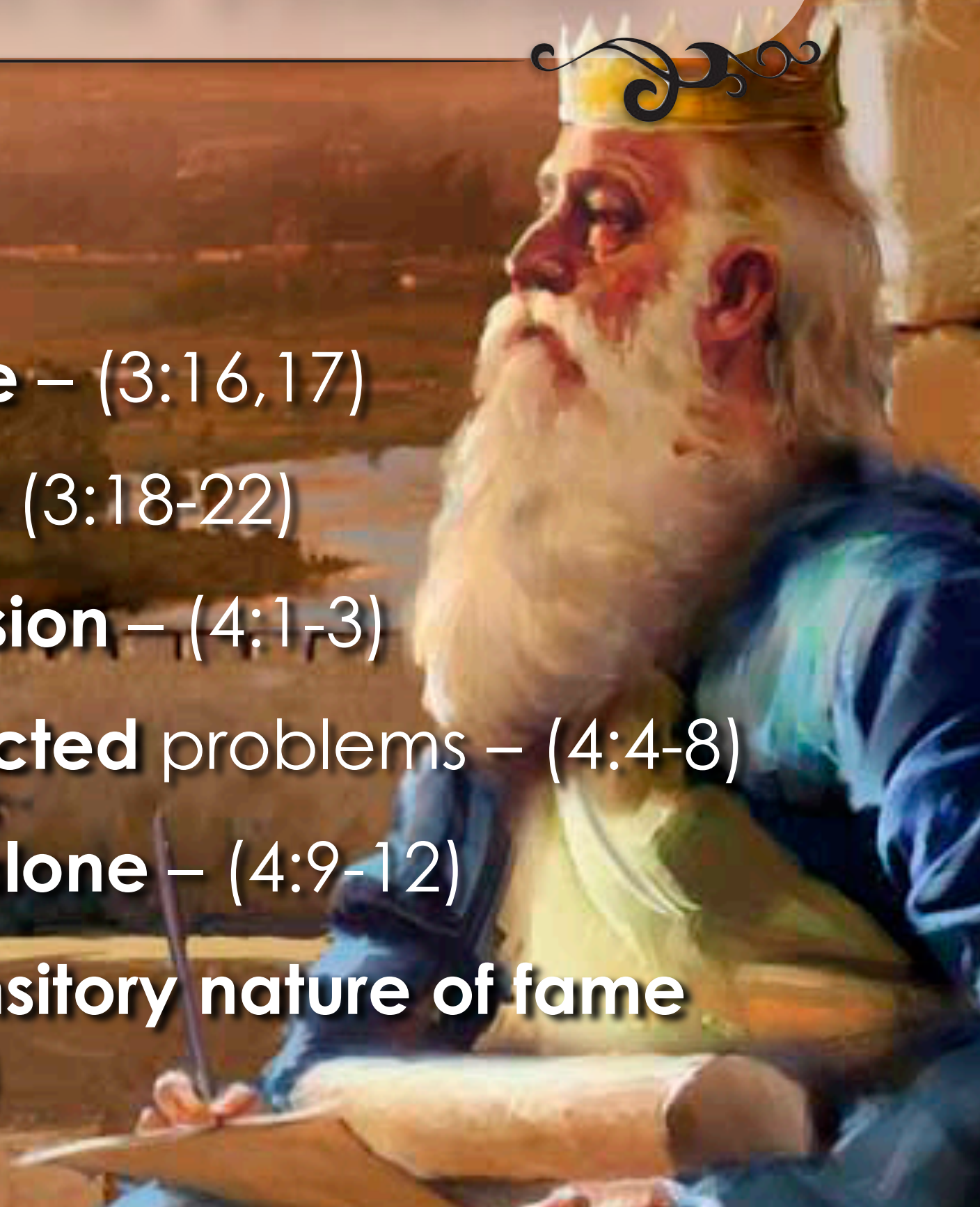
### ► The Insecurity of High Position (4:13–16)

- Who wants to be led by a leader who does not appreciate them?
- Who wants to lead and not be appreciated?
- It is FOOLISH to forfeit godliness to lead men - & it is foolish to place our hopes IN HUMAN LEADERS! —



# “The Problem of Problems”

- The problem of **injustice** – (3:16,17)
- The problem of **death** – (3:18-22)
- The problem of **oppression** – (4:1-3)
- The problem of **self inflicted** problems – (4:4-8)
- The problem of **being alone** – (4:9-12)
- The problem of the **transitory nature of fame and prestige** – (4:13-16)





# “The Problem of Problems”

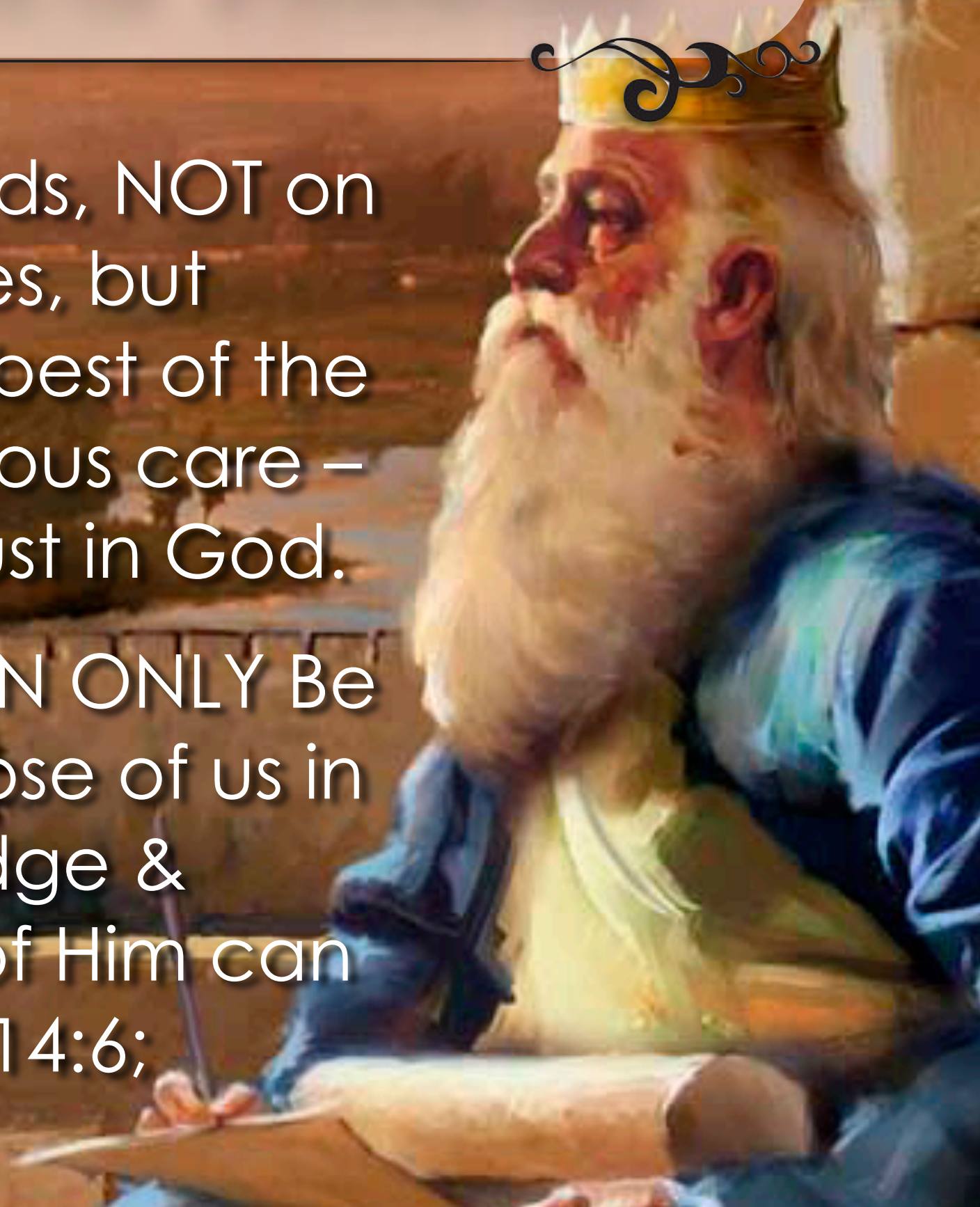
- God's desire is that we turn our hearts to Him!
- He is secure and provides us security in the midst of turbulence





# “The Problem of Problems”

- Our happiness depends, NOT on external circumstances, but upon our making the best of the present – without anxious care – through reverential trust in God.
- Eternal HAPPINESS CAN ONLY Be found IN CHRIST — Those of us in Christ have a knowledge & PEACE none outside of Him can know or have! - John 14:6;









# UNDER THE SUN

Joy, Sorrow, Vanity, and What Really Matters in Life

*Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. -Ecclesiastes 12:13*

## “The Problem of Problems”

Ecclesiastes 3:15-4:16

**Charts by Don McClain**

Preached March 10, 2019

West 65<sup>th</sup> Street church of Christ/ P.O. Box 190062 / Little Rock AR 72219 / 501-568-1062

Prepared using Keynote

Email – [donmcclain@sbcglobal.net](mailto:donmcclain@sbcglobal.net)

Our Website: [w65stchurchofchrist.com](http://w65stchurchofchrist.com)



# 1 Timothy 6:3–10 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, <sup>4</sup> he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, <sup>5</sup> useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of* gain. From such withdraw yourself. <sup>6</sup> Now godliness with contentment is great gain.



# 1 Timothy 6:3–10 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. <sup>8</sup> And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

<sup>9</sup> But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.